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Why the Allies will Win.

An Interview with

THE RT. HON. D. LLOYD GEORGE,

Minister of Munitions.

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by

The Editor of the *Secolo* of Milan.

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INTERVIEW WITH MR. LLOYD GEORGE.

The British Minister of Munitions started the conversation with that simple directness of manner and natural confidence of the man who knows his own mind and has no difficulty in seeing into the mind of his interlocutor. He asked me at once many questions. "Have you come from Milan?" "How are things going on in Italy?" "What is the state of public opinion?" "What is Giolitti doing?" "What about munitions?" "Are you making good progress in producing shells?"

The reader must not imagine that all this was the common manœuvre of the man in a high and responsible position who, when speaking to a journalist, prefers asking to answering questions. Mr. Lloyd George seemed to me sincerely interested in the information and opinions he was eliciting from me, as he undoubtedly was conversant with our affairs and political situation before and after the

war. I spoke freely to him on several points, and he freely opened his mind.

He seemed particularly well informed as to our financial and economic position, and he entirely concurred with my view that English capitalists and merchants should not lose this opportunity of displacing German influences by getting a firm foothold in our country, and establishing with us larger commercial and financial relations.

As to our war—

"Oh!" said Mr. Lloyd George, "I know what your war is like. I received some time ago, from an English officer, a photograph taken on your fighting line. I could hardly believe my eyes. The photograph reproduced a moving scene among some Alpine peaks.

"To think that fighting is going on at such heights, among insuperable rocks, on eternal snows, that you are dragging your guns up there, that you have to approach your enemy by hand over hand, is something amazing. And I have been told what the Carso plateau is. Why, it is like a rocky wall which bars the gate of

Italy. And your soldiers are fighting well.

"England appreciates the unconquerable tenacity which the brave Italian troops are showing, and hopes soon to congratulate them on driving the enemy from all the unredeemed territory, and to witness further triumphs of their gallantry on behalf of the Allies."

Question of Freights.

"We always were true friends of Italy since the Garibaldian days—and now those days have come back again to you with the old glory. What I say of the country I may say of the Government. Our relations are excellent. There may be occasionally incidents and misunderstandings, but there never was and there never will be any ill-will on our side.

"Now, for instance, I know you have difficulties and misgivings as to the question of freights. But as to that you cannot blame either the Government or the nation as a whole. Why, we are experiencing the same difficulties and hard-

ships ourselves. The rise in freights is a natural, though deplorable, consequence of the situation. There is a great scarcity of available ships of all countries, and this scarcity is bound to react on the freights.

"However, something must be done, and will be done, even now, and you may be sure that, within reasonable limits, our Government will do all that is within its power to better things, also to the advantage of Italy."

At this point the conversation turned from Italy to Great Britain, and I asked Mr. Lloyd George whether he was pleased with the progress of munition work.

"Yes," he said. "We woke up slowly to it. But I am now perfectly satisfied with what we are doing.

Patriotic Miners.

"We have now 2,500 factories, employing one and a half million men, and a quarter of a million women. We have adapted old plants and established new ones on modern lines. We are not only satisfying the requirements of our own

army, but we are also supplying our Allies, particularly Russia. One cannot have an idea of the tremendous work going on in Britain just now unless one can see it.

"Some French journalists and politicians have come over here to inspect our factories, and they have been greatly impressed by what they have seen. We expect soon a party of Russians for the same purpose. I hope the Italians, too, will visit us. They would see with their own eyes, they would come in contact with us, and would form a better idea of how things are going on in Britain, and I am sure that many misconceptions and misapprehensions would thus be dissipated, to our common advantage."

"What people in Italy do not understand," I said, "is why the trade unions did not accept the modification of their rules as purely a measure for the war only."

Mr. Lloyd George said: "Naturally the great trade unions are jealous of their rights and customs. It was through them that the British workmen have won

their industrial birthright and their liberties which they enjoy as workers; the wages they receive and the regulation of hours are the outcome of organised effort."

He counselled me not to be alarmed about the resolution of the miners. "The miners," he said, "are among the toughest fighters in the British Army, and so many were eager to enlist that we had to stop them."

The Minister of Munitions' son, by the way, Major Richard Lloyd George, is in a regiment composed almost entirely of South Wales miners. Mr. Lloyd George's second son, Lieutenant Gwilym Lloyd George, is in the same division.

"Our voluntary army," said Mr. Lloyd George, "exceeds 3,000,000, and the men now being trained and going to the front are the flower of the nation's manhood. They are the classes between 19 and 30 years of age, who are largely exhausted in the armies of the enemy. They are just coming on with us, and they are splendid material.

"I am absolutely confident," declared Mr. Lloyd George.

"But on what ground do you base your confidence?"

"First of all, on the fact that now the Allies are at last taking counsel together. We have made mistakes in the past, all of us, and we all suffered alike. We were acting independently from one another. Great Britain was waging her war. So were France, Russia and Italy. Only lately we have steered a better course.

What Union Means.

"There is now, through the councils we have formed, a constant exchange of views between the Allies, and all-important decisions are taken by common accord. The relations between Great Britain and France are perfectly harmonious. Italy, too, is united in our councils. My friend, M. Thomas, the French Under-Secretary of State for Munitions, has just suggested to me that our next meeting should take place in Rome, or in some other Italian city. I should be delighted at that if time and distance permitted. Now you know what union means. But we are and shall be

stronger, not only because we are united, but also because we shall have really more men and more munitions, and this is the second fact on which I base my confidence.

"By next spring we shall have turned out an immense amount of munitions. We shall have for the first time in the war more than the enemy. Our superiority in men and materials will be unquestioned, and I think the war for us is beginning only now.

"We were all caught unprepared. The French, Russians and Italians had to organise their armies. We had to create a new one. We have now three millions under arms; by the spring we shall have a million more. You have seen our soldiers. They are strong, fit, and well equipped."

"Yes," I said, "I was really struck by their appearance. But what about officers?"

Germany's Losses.

"We have made them. Young men from public schools and universities do not take long to learn. They are not

professional. But are there many professional officers left anywhere? I am afraid that a great many of them have been killed. Germany, too, cannot be well off by this time as to professional officers, and not only as to that.

"Her economic and financial conditions are getting worse every day. And that is the third fact on which I base my confidence. The riots in Berlin and other cities must mean something. She can still import things, but not on a scale to enable her to go on successfully for a long period. The army will be the last to feel the distress in Germany, but it, too, will feel it."

"Do you think," I asked, "there is any danger of the war ending in a military deadlock?"

"That would not be the end," he replied; "the victory must be a real and a final victory. The long line, extending to 2,000 miles, held by the enemy must be broken. You must not think of a deadlock. You must crack the nut before you get at the kernel. It may take a long time, but you must hear the crack.

"Wearing down the outside by attrition is too long, and would not be a smashing and pulverising victory. The pressure on the enemy is becoming greater; they are spreading their frontiers temporarily, but they are becoming weaker in a military sense. The process of strangulation is going on, and will squeeze more and more the material resources of the enemy.

"This is a war of Democracy," continued Mr. Lloyd George. "If it were not a war of Democracy I would not be in it. I was against the last war in which Great Britain was engaged, but on this occasion the whole future of Democracy—in Britain, France, Russia, Italy, all over the world—is involved. It is a final test between military autocracy and political liberty.

"It is a grim struggle, but we are going to win; of that I am quite confident. The enemy has gone beyond the height of his power, and is on the down grade. We and our Allies are gaining strength every day. The Central Empires have lost their opportunity of victory, and they know it.

"Our whole country is united on the war. If there were an election now there would not be one member returned who is against the war. I do not foresee any difficulty with regard to compulsion.

"No fewer than six millions have offered themselves for the Army. Some were unfit, many were required for munition works, for railways, for mines—national work which is just as essential as services in the field. The number who would come under compulsion was at the most 320,000, and that number is diminishing every day by enlistment.

"Make no mistake about it. Great Britain is determined to fight this war to a finish. We may make mistakes, but we do not give in. It was the obstinacy of Britain that wore down Napoleon after twenty years of warfare. Allies broke away one by one, but Britain kept on. Our Allies on this occasion are just as solid and determined as we are."

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